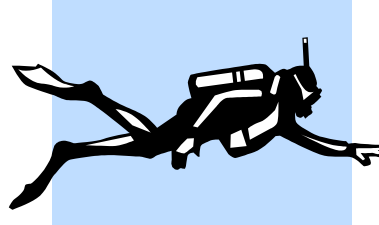


Gulf of Mexico Amendment 34

Frequently Asked Questions

July 2012



Proposed Rule – Income Requirement & Crew Size

What will the Amendment do?

- Eliminate the income requirement for renewing Gulf of Mexico commercial reef fish permits.
- Increase the maximum crew size from 3 to 4 people for dual-permitted (Commercial & Charter) vessels in the Gulf of Mexico

Why are these new regulations necessary?

- The current income requirement is no longer necessary for NOAA Fisheries Service to control access to commercial reef fish permits. Several other regulations, such as the individual fishing quota program, ensure that the commercial permits are being used for commercial fishing. In the past few years, it has been difficult for some commercial fishermen to meet the income requirement as the economy required they find additional means of income.
- The current regulations limit the crew size on dual-permitted vessels to 3 people while fishing commercially. When these vessels are conducting commercial spear fishing trips, this regulation prevents them from having 2 divers in the water and 2 crew onboard which is considered a safe diving practice by the U.S. Coast Guard Diving Policies and Procedures Manual. Increasing the maximum crew size to 4 people allows these vessels to improve their safety at sea.

What is the status of the current action?

- The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council submitted the plan amendment to NOAA Fisheries Service on May 3, 2012, for review by the Secretary of Commerce.
- NOAA Fisheries announced the availability of Amendment 34 on July 10th, 2012, requesting public review and comment through September 10, 2012.
- NOAA Fisheries Service published the proposed rule in the *Federal Register* (77 FR 42251) on July 18, 2012, requesting public review and comment through August 17, 2012.